



What was the exact wording on the sign above Jesus' head while he was being publicly executed? Do the four gospels contradict?

Alleged contradiction:

What was the exact wording on the cross?

- (a) "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" ([Matthew 27:37](#))
- (b) "The King of the Jews" ([Mark 15:26](#))
- (c) "This is the King of the Jews" ([Luke 23:38](#))
- (d) "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" ([John 19:19](#))

This accusation assumes that each gospel writer was required to be exactly precise in his reporting.

A second key point to keep in mind, however, is that all four gospel writers report in agreement that the sign had the words, **"The king of the Jews"**, at a minimum.

A third key point that Bible detractors are generally unaware of is that Koine' Greek did not have quotation marks. Quotes in Bible translations have been added by the translators. To save space and time, non-essential words can be omitted.

A fourth key point is to know is that the common spoken language around Jerusalem was Hebrew, which all four gospel writers knew fluently, They also were fluent in Koine' Greek,

the international language of communication, and, more importantly, the language they wrote the gospels in. Matthew, a tax collector for the Romans (**Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:27-32**), had to have known Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire.

Since **“the inscription . . . was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek” (John 19:20 NAB)**, gospel writers could have been quoting from different language versions. For example, Matthew could have quoted from the Latin. The medical doctor Luke was the most proficient in Greek, likely because Greece was the center of medical knowledge. So he could have quoted from the Greek. John perhaps quoted from the Hebrew, hence the fuller expression. Mark, whose gospel is the shortest, perhaps quoted only the bare minimum of the inscription.

The main point is that all four gospel writers report that the very public inscription stated the main charge against Jesus that he was being executed for.

“Pilate”, who had **“the inscription written and put on the cross” (John 19:19 NAB)**, obviously did it as a way of getting back at **“the chief priests of the Jews”**, who had wrung the reluctant execution order out of him. This shows up in the way they asked him to charge the wording of the sign to, **“he said, I am king of the Jews”**, and Pilate’s very curt, terse reply, **“What I have written, I have written” (John 19:21,22 NAB)**.

To the great chagrin of the chief priests, Pilate wanted everyone to know what Jesus was. Thus, God used the skeptic politician Pilate to spread the gospel.

After examining the evidence, we find there is no contradiction among the gospels about the wording on the sign above Jesus’ head.